1:Sanders Z-5,N (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

82 787 the people's attitudes. One must not venture under trees when there is lightning or go to sleep during the day under a walnut tree with its thick foliage (in Central and Southern Greece) or under a fig tree (farther south). A young woman from the Peloponnesos explained that Christ was sitting under a fig tree when he was taken, thus accounting, in her mind at [777] least, for this taboo. As we shall soon see, the idea of fate, destiny, or necessity is strong today, as it was in classical Greece. Natural phenomena are important in helping one learn what is to come or in helping to ward off some impending evil or difficulty.

824 [787] Plants to some extent aid in knowing what lies ahead. However, most of the blossoms, fragile and fragrant, appear for such a short period in the spring that they are enjoyed primarily for their beauty. Fruit trees in bloom are looked upon as a glorious miracle of color, and one is urged to go out of the way just to see a particularly beautiful tree, especially an almond tree in January. But there are some plants that are appreciated for more than their beauty.

824 777 539 In many parts of Greece belief in the good luck brought by a four-leafed clover is strong. No bullet can affect it, as shown by the following folk story:

> Once there was a man who had a silver tobacco case on which he had stuck a four-leafed clover. They put it up as a target and shot bullet after bullet but could not hit it. Afterwards they took away the clover and the case was easily pierced.

824 [844] If a peasant from Northern Greece comes upon a form of the peony known as "The Holy Virgin's Hand" (*Tes Panagias to cheri*), he may remember that sprigs of it are thrown into the jug from which the water is poured for a woman in travail.[6] The name just as much as the properties of the herb is supposed to relieve the pains of labor. After the birth, the midwife is apt to hang cloves of garlic on the mother and the baby to ward [789] off the Evil Eye. Garlic is so powerful against evil that, when one fears [754] that an envious person will cast a spell upon the animal or baby or any other object of envy, one should say *skortha sta matia sou* (garlic in your eyes).

[538] Anemones, hyacinths, basil, and thyme,[6] as well as the olive tree, the laurel, or the cypress, have stories associated with them which the old 82 people tell to the children. Thus, nature seems intimate since so much of its handiwork carries deep and traditional meaning for the villager.

825 787 Animals have an even more special meaning. Both the occasional wild animal and the domestic animals reveal what to expect in the way of catastrophe or changing weather. For example, a man plowing in Central Greece may see a horsefly rest on someone and read into that simple occurrence the coming of a guest. If a person from the island of Spetsai catches a

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and strangly moved. Not only the majestic view affected her but the knowledge that this same sea had carried off to America many relatives, only a few of whom had returned. To her the actual sight of the sea meant a new horizon; it gave her peasant world a new dimension.

For the slanders the biggest celebration of the year is Epiphany (January 6) when all of the families go down to the sea to participate in "the blessing of the water." The cross is thrown into the sea and boys dive for it, the lucky one obtaining it receiving a gift of money and considering himself fortunate for the coming year. This ceremony represents the baptism of Christ, but its performance — the contact of the cross with the water — supposedly gives the water dipped up at the ceremony a special efficacy in healing sickness. It is treasured holy water. Ethnologists tell us that this blessing of the sea dates from pre-Christian times, another indication of the hold of the sea on these island dwellers. It is still an island habit, when there are big storms at sea, to sweep the church and throw the sweepings into the sea to calm it; or the people may take oil from the lamp in the church and spread it on the water, begging the sea to quiet down.

The sea, like the mountains, has its own folklore. One of the most persistent beliefs among seamen is the presence in the deep of the sister of Alexander the Great, the Gorgon, often called the spirit of the sea.[17] This legend is beautifully told by Elias Venezis, one of Greece's outstanding writers, in his novel *Aeolia*:

> Once upon a time in the land of Greece there lived a young king, Alexander the Great. He had a sister called Gorgona. Alexander the Great traveled to distant lands, crossing many mountains and seas, and when he returned he brought back with him the water of immortality. He would have drunk it when his hour of death came, and he would never have died. He would have conquered all the strongholds of the world, and would have reigned forever. But he was not quick enough. His sister saw the water of immortality and, without knowing what it was, drank it. Then Alexander the Great was filled with rage and seized her by the hair and threw her into the sea. Ever since then the Gorgon lives in the sea. Her eyes are very round and she has snakes in her hair. Her arms are of bronze and there are golden wings on her shoulders. From her waist down she is a fish, and she is queen of all the other fish in the sea. She keeps alive the memory of the great king her brother who died when he was young and she always asks seafaring men she meets on her journeys:
>
> "Is Alexander the Great still alive?"
>
> "He is alive, and he reigns," they answer her.
>
> When she hears this, the Gorgon is filled with joy and orders the waves to let the caique pass. But if any seaman does not know this, and tells her that the king is dead, then he has nothing to hope for. The Gorgon raises a typhoon and seizes him and his caique and its crew and drags them down with her. Then she rises high onto the waves again to find another sailor who can reassure her that her brother is living, and that Alexander the Great has never died. . . .[18]

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753 776 credited to supernatural causes, and there is no ill to which flesh is heir, — from a headache to the plague, — without some demon responsible for it. A nightmare and the sense of physical oppression which often accompanies it are not traced to so vulgar a cause as a heavy supper, but are dignified as the work of a malicious being named *Vrachnas*, who in the dead of night delights to seat himself on the chest of some sleeper, and by his weight produces an unpleasant feeling of congestion. . . .[13]

755 759 [793] For cures, then, one turns not only to the doctor but at times to the priest, who will come and read from "the holy books," or even more frequently to the village wise women, who understand what herbs to use and the particular charms appropriate to every occasion. These wise women usually keep their activities secret from the priest. Many remedies which seem fantastic, such as curing boils by putting pus from them on a piece of bread and giving it to a dog to eat, make sense to the peasant. One symbolically and supernaturally transfers the illness from the patient to some other host, susceptible or immune as the case may be.

755 [868] 755 757 [184] A mother will pass on her knowledge of folk medicine to her daughters, although they will often seek the help of some wise woman particularly skilled in caring for the sick. In order to learn more about the ordinary folk remedies, we compared a list drawn up by D. Loukopoulos for Aetolia, a district in Central Greece, with those cures believed in by Chrysoula, a wise woman on the island of Spetsai, just off the Peloponnesos.[14] As was expected, the prescriptions did not tally on all points, but their general purpose and approach were much the same.

To cure malaria:

Wash a cup out, give patient holy water on an empty stomach without letting the patient know what he is drinking. After he drinks this once or twice at dawn he'll feel much better. (Aetolia)

To cure stomach ache:

Boil powdered acorn caps in one hundred drams of water, add clove and four pieces of *rigane* (wild origan). When it has been boiled down to size of an ouzo (brandy) cup, strain it and add some rum. When the sick man drinks it, all pains will ease. (Aetolia)

Boil the stem of the poppy plant and give the brew to patient to drink. (Spetsai)

755 793 *To cure insanity:*

Insanity cannot be cured with medicines. The priest reads to the insane person out of the Four Gospels, then may take him to a monastery. If he does not get better, he is tied (often chained) to the ring in the tiling of the church floor. (Aetolia)

[789] The priest exorcises the demon by using the ritual of St. Basil the Great, or some sacred relic may be taken to the insane person in the hope of driving away the demon. The patient is not taken to the monastery. (Spetsai)

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851 608 [843] [835] [582] little importance. (A pregnant woman is not supposed to serve as a koumbara, for people say that something bad will happen either to her or the child being baptized. A person is also supposed to baptize only children of the same sex, for if he serves as a koumbaros of both boys and girls, two of these with the same godparent might fall in love, which would be considered incest since spiritual bonds count as much as biological kinship in determining marriage prohibitions.)

851 608 788 [789] After the small group of friends and relatives has gathered, the priest comes out from behind the altar. He usually displays great skill in handling the infant, even if the baby starts to howl his displeasure at the proceedings. The priest first turns the baby toward the east, blows into its face three times to chase away the evil spirits, seals it with the sign of the cross, and utters four exorcisms against temptation. Then the godparent renounces for the child "the devil and all his works" in answer to a thrice-repeated question from the priest, after which he recites the Apostles' Creed.[1]

[778] The tepid water standing in a large copper basin is next blessed by the priest, who pours consecrated oil on it. Then the godparent, who has rubbed the baby all over with oil, hands it to the priest who three times plunges it into the font while he recites the appropriate formula. Once the immersion has been completed, the priest anoints the baby in different parts of its body and holds it up to the altar three times if it is a boy. The baby is next dressed and carried around the font three times by the godparent who holds a candle in one hand; the priest also joins in this procession. The ceremony concludes with additional words from the New Testament and a few words of admonition to the child, whereupon those present congratulate the godparent with the wish, "may it live." Then everyone goes to the home of the parents for a tremendous dinner, usually featuring roast lamb, which is just as important a part of the affair as the church ceremony. The godparent is given a place of high honor. (He also has had the responsibility of choosing the name for the child, usually that of a grandparent.[2])

851 574 608 [262] [553] Although I have attended many social functions in Greece, the joy and fun which characterize the baptismal feasts stand out in my memory. Not only is the food delicious and plentiful, but there is invariably plenty of wine and good-natured bantering. Most of the time, too, there is dancing, spirited and informal. Children of the guests as well as the brothers and sisters of the newly baptized infant are often present, and manage to end up in the dance or very much in its way, thereby adding to the general merriment. Weddings, such as the one described in the previous chapter, are occasions for merriment because they give promise of providing children, especially boys, to continue the family line; the baptism is merry because this promise has been fulfilled.

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Religious Holidays and Namedays

Family members, however, do not have to wait for the coming of an annual festival or fair to find an occasion for dancing or taking things easy. There are many other religious holidays calling for special observances in addition to Easter, the most important, and the Twelve Days surrounding Christmas. For example, Greek civil servants observe, with pay, approximately twenty-five holidays throughout the year, and industrial workers honor about half this number, some of them with pay. The villager, closer to the traditions for which the holidays stand, will celebrate the full twenty-five and others added for good measure.

To trace all of these holidays would call for a detailed Calendar of Customs, a list far too lengthy to be incorporated here even if one had mastered through the years the many regional variations throughout Greece.[6] What is more important is the realization that holidays do play an important part in adding rhythm and color to family and community life, as well as indicating to the farmer, whose agricultural work cycle is closely meshed with the regularly recurring holidays, that it is time for him to take up or finish some important activity.

I tend to associate each of the major Greek holidays with the particular village or city I happened to be in at the time of its observance. On one May Day, for example, I was in the heart of the Peloponnesos where groups of school children with their teachers were taking walks through the fields, an excursion-picnic. And, then, in the early afternoon to be invited to participate in the festivities at the school proved pleasant indeed. An important part of the activities was the hanging of the wreath over the door of the school, a pagan custom supposed to drive away evil.

Near Phlorina, in 1953 and again in Athens in 1955, I observed the commemoration of the holiday in honor of St. John the Baptist on June 24. This pagan midsummer festival has survived on into the present so much so that even in Athens, to say nothing of the villages, on St. John's Eve small boys light fires in the yards or streets and jump over them. One is supposed to burn all worthless things as a symbol of purification of the house and, as token of personal purification, one jumps over the fire while shouting "I leave my sins and my fleas behind me."[7] Into the same fire the peasants throw the withered May Day wreaths. This too is the evening when the girls of the village seek to learn their fortunes from the "dumb" or speechless water which a maiden or, in some places a young boy, brings from the fountain while remaining absolutely quiet despite the efforts of the bystanders to make the bearer talk. Later, each girl drops some easily identified possession into the jar which is "locked" until the next evening, thereby giving the name of *kledona* (from *kledi*, key) to this particular custom. When it is unlocked, the girls sing songs which foretell

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The second, third, and fourth of January are ordinary working days, but on January 5 people expect a half-day off since it is Epiphany Eve, at which time children also sing the kalenda about the baptism of "the child of God." There is a five o'clock service in the morning at which occurs the first blessing of the waters. Those in attendance have brought jugs or cups for the blessed water which they take home to use in curing the sick or preventing the Evil Eye during the year. But on Epiphany itself occurs the most spectacular second blessing of the water, done in front of everybody at the church or near some body of water into which the cross is thrown. Swimmers are ready to dive in after it and struggle for its possession. The one who succeeds in gaining it is not only assured of good luck during the year but he can pass throughout the crowd and even the community to collect money from those solicited.

On Epiphany the priest visits the homes of the parish to bless each room by sprinkling holy water there, thus guaranteeing that all kallikantzari[1] have been exorcised and chased back to their lairs beneath the earth until the next Twelve Days comes around.

Easter brings with it a wealth of customs, a blend of the pagan and the Christian, which are lightened by the coming of spring and the renewal of nature. Although they are "all of a piece" in the peasant mind, they can be best understood by the outsider in terms of Carnival, Lent, and Holy Week.

Carnival begins nine weeks before Easter and runs for three weeks. The second week is climaxed by Meat Sunday and the third week by Cheese Sunday. This is the time for weddings which otherwise could not take place until after Easter; this is the time for masquerades, although these are less pronounced in the villages than in the cities; this is also the time when family groups get together for little feasts before the Great Fast starts forty days before Easter. The last two Saturdays of Carnival and the first Saturday of Lent are *psychosabbata*, or memorial days for the dead. On the Thursday of the middle week of Carnival, members of the family, bringing their own food with them, gather in the home of the eldest relative to have a special meal, and on this occasion they allow some dish to scorch on the stove and smell up the house in the belief that this will bring good luck. This day is called *tsichnopempti*, since *tsichna* stands for the odor of burning flesh.

Meat Sunday is the eighth one before Easter (the villagers count Easter as one of the Sundays). On this day the people are supposed to start doing without meat products for the Lenten period. On the following Sunday, called Cheese Sunday, the forbidden foods are broadened to include milk products as well. This latter holiday is especially colorful in many parts of Greece, for on this day the village boys prepare piles of wood on various heights to be lit after dark. This is also the day for visiting older relatives

1 [These are bad spirits – ANALYST]

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the icon of Christ is on his right and that of St. John the Baptist next to it. To his left one sees on the altar the icon of the Virgin, and farther to the left the icon of the saint for whom the church was named.

The congregation stands during the service, except for a few infirm who can lean against supports along the wall; there is no instrumental music, as the priest and the chanter carry the service themselves in a language that [198] much of the time is unintelligible to the worshippers. The gospels are read in Koine, or New Testament Greek, and the liturgy, written by St. John Chrysostom toward the end of the fourth century, is in the Greek of that period. When the priest delivers a sermon, he uses his version of katharevousa, if he is sufficiently schooled; otherwise, he speaks in demotike. Apparently the worshippers are moved by the ceremony, the procession, the swinging censers, and the chanting even more than by the actual meaning of the words to which they listen. Now and then in the liturgy, however, come familiar passages which most can understand because of having learned their meaning in school or from some relative.

The worshippers, among whom small children may be running or tug- [852] ging, include very few men. They come out for special festival services but [562] show no interest in the regular Sunday-morning service, which is viewed as the woman's social hour. Even during the service women catch up on the latest happenings throughout the village.

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The priest, however, is busy at other times, too. Dorothy Lee describes it this way:

> Religion permeates Greek life, punctuating it with ritual. No Greek, urban or rural, would think of initiating anything important without a religious inauguration. Schools open with the inaugurative *agiasmos*, "making holy"; the foundation stone of every house is laid with *agiasmos;* merchants begin new undertakings with the proper religious inauguration. On Epiphany, the sea is made holy for those who journey on it. In the country, blessed[water is carried from the Epiphany Mass to sprinkle on the fields. The Virgin and the Saints are invoked, but not mainly as correctives; their main function is to endow an undertaking with good and success, it is not primarily to prevent or correct. . . . Priests are called in, and Saints and the Virgin invoked,, also, when difficulties arise. Vows are made for the recovery of a loved one; the priest is called when the family has had a run of misfortune, to "make holy" and exorcise the evil. Priests conduct a rain litany to break a drought.[13]

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The parish as such consists of no such array of organized groups as comprise an American congregation; the priest is not trying to convert the unbeliever or change the daily life of his people. He iis there to help them meet life's emergencies, to instill a love for their religicon and their country, and to act as peacemaker when disputes threaten the lharmony of the community.[14]

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to read and write. Besides this, agricultural lectures were given to the farmers by the agriculturist of the area during the winter months on different topics concerning the farming life of the area. A series of 5 lectures were organized by the priest of the village on different topics such as history, travel, biography, and inventions. Thus the farmers of Megali Vrisi had an ample chance to get whatever they could from these different agencies.

/76/ Part VII Religion

Magic. The people of Megali Vrisi, due to numerous activities of an educational character that have been established there, find themselves in a transition period of trying to put aside old beliefs and adopt new ones. They still believe that certain people in the village have power to command the spirits and perform miracles. A young man who thinks that his sweetheart does not like him finds as an outlet the consultation of magicians and their command of the spirits to change her mind. If a member of the family is in a foreign country or on travel the magicians are asked to order the spirits to protect them. A pregnant woman desiring to give birth to a boy instead of a girl asks the magicians to act favorably to her desires. The people who perform the role of a magician are old women with suspicious looks. The same women may act as mid-wives, too.

Certain signs handed down from generation to generation are believed to be true. A black cat crossing the road is thought a bad sign. If you meet a priest early in the morning, they think the whole day will be filled with failures. Dogs crying mean somebody is going /77/ to die in the neighborhood. When the eyelid moves fast some good news is coming.

The above are a few of the good and bad luck signs.

Religious beliefs. Almost every farmer has a Saint in whom he believes strongly. The ikon of the Saint, in front of which he

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of the Saints and Christ that made them often take extremely dangerous steps against their conquerors. The leaders of the churches became victims of the cruelty, but at last these very same persecuted priests started the revolt and gave freedom to the Greek people. Thus religion is a part of our nationalism, it is a part of our freedom and a part of our struggle for existence. I do not think any Christian people have undergone the test for Christianity that the Greek people did. If one goes back deep into the causes of the present Greek stubbornness in resisting the impossible and standing by their promise up to the end to help England, we will find it again in their religion.

As long as people live in the religion they have developed throughout centuries they cannot be conquered.

Faith in time of trouble. For every trouble there is a remedy and there is some source that will come to aid. Long dry seasons often lead the people to /80/ all day and night prayers to Saint Ilias for rain. When members of the family get sick, the priest offers prayer. The people strongly believe in the mercifulness and forgiveness of God. All occurrences, good or bad, come from God and He rewards and punishes people according to their deeds. Possibly for people who are not contaminated with the explanation that science gives to many phenomena, it is better for them to have blind faith and hope for the solution of their troubles.

The church. The church occupies the central part of the village and has a large yard around it. Its steeple is wooden and temporarily keeps the bells that call the people to the morning and evening church services. The bells also serve for a fire alarm as well as school time for the children. When the people left their countries they left behind livestock, furniture, and many valuable things, but they succeeded in bringing with them the ikons and the church bells. Some of the ikons date back to the 16th century. The lower parts of the ikons are worn out from the kisses received in the church. The people have great pride in their church and in the power of their ikons to perform miracles. Regardless of

The framework of experience and the structuring of the thinking processes must also be known before change is acceptably suggested; at any rate, it must not be taken for granted that these are the same for the Greeks as they are for foreign experts. For example, a child care specialist in the United States is inveighing against the prevalence of bottle feeding when she urges mothers to suckle their babies, but to the Greeks, she is, naturally, inveighing against engaging a wet-nurse. 178

It is helpful also to know what can be discussed publicly, and printed in the newspaper, without offence. The government calls artificial insemination "artificial reproduction". An attempt by the writer to elicit information on the subject under the term "insemination" from recently and previously emigrated Greeks, met with failure since the women (coming from sections other than Athens and Salonica) had not heard of the programme, and were hesitant to mention it to their husbands; they obviously felt that the investigator, as a woman, could not approach the men with such questions. 178 203 831

There is a recognized variety among Greeks; and the differences are a matter of pride to them. They do not want to be treated as if they were all the same. There is also a difference in the attitude toward change. The intellectuals, the men high in the administration, do believe that the main part of the Greek population is backward, and are often ready for drastic and iconoclastic changes. For example, late in 1950, when Attica was suffering from drought, the government considered having the clouds seeded. But the peasants have always had a solution for drought: the priest and the villagers walk in a rain litany around the place. Different regions also vary in their acceptance of the new: the Greeks who came as refugees from the coastal areas of Asia Minor are, as a whole, more ready for the new; they are more enterprising, more ready to take a chance on the future. 178 184 [189]

One of the Greek attitudes deeply imbedded in their social structure is taken up here at greater length, since it is basic to many of the proposed changes; this is the phrasing of co-operative undertakings. 178 476

The suggestions for changes in agriculture, industrial developments, for the introduction of sanitary measures, demand co-operation and participation by the people concerned in bringing about these changes. The conception of co-operation as developed in the urban, scientific cultures of Europe and North America, is not usual in the rest of the world. This conception involves a collective working towards an impersonal, abstract end; the joining of a group created with a view towards a future end; and the ability to trust the other members of such a group to act according to abstract, impersonal honesty, as, for example, to act believing that the statistics others present are objectively sound, and are not coloured by personal considerations.

The traditional Greek pattern, however, is that individuals work not collectively but within an intricate web of interdependencies and